Condition of Rural Poor

1533. SHRI BHUPINDER SINGH MANN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the majority of the rural poor are still languishing in object poverty and pauperism due to being underpaid, with lesser opportunities of employment, lack of education and controlled economy etc.;

(b) if so, what steps Government would take to alleviate the poverty of rural poor by taking into account their labour component which is meagre as compared to that of urban area;

(c) whether the liberalization process which has been introduced to all sectors of economy like industry, commerce etc. will also be realized fully by Government to the rural sector to ensure optimum development of that sector; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (DEPARTMENT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT): (SHRI UTTAMBHAI PATEL): (a) to (d) The Government has been making concerted efforts to alleviate poverty in the country. The major poverty alleviation programmes which have been implemented in the rural areas of the country are - (i) Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and (ii) Jawahar Rozgar Yojana. These programmes are being implemented with a view to provide employment opportunities to the rural poor which would enable them to have sustainable income. IRDP is a self-employment and asset-generating programme while JRY is a wage employment one and both are targetted to the poor. Alleviation of rural poverty has therefore been one of the primary objectives in economic planning and development in India.

According to the estimates of people living below the poverty line made by the Planning Commission. There has been substantial reduction in the poverty ratio in rural areas as the percentage of people below the poverty line declined from 51.2 per cent in 1977-78 to 33.4 per cent in 1987-88. However, poverty alleviation continues to have special emphasis in the Eighth Five Year Plan and accordingly, the Central outlay for Rural Development has been substantially stepped up to Rs. 30,000 Crores compared to the expenditure of Rs. 10,956 Crores in Seventh Five Year Plan. In the context of the liberalization process of the economy, the Govt. has also taken steps to ensure increased outlays for Rural Development. Accordingly, the outlay for 1993-94 was Rs. 5,010 Crores and during 1994-95, the Central outlay has been further stepped up to Rs. 7,010 Crores.

Some of the new initiatives taken by the Government during 1993-94 include introduction of Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) in 1778 RPDS (Revised Public Distribution System) blocks in 261 districts in the country and the Intensified JRY in 120 backward districts. The EAS aims at providing assured employment for 100 days of unskilled manual work to the rural poor who are in need of employment and seeking it. The Intensive JRY scheme is under implementation in the backward districts where there is concentration of unemployment and under-employment and hence the need for intensified efforts at Rural Development. The Government is therefore taking all efforts to tackle the problem of poverty in the rural areas through a series of anti poverty programmes as also rural development programmes.